Quinceanera Order of Events

Read through our notes below on how to plan your quinceanera. You will also find explanations of the traditional events in a quinceanera including the presentation of the last doll and the first dance.

Religious Celebration: During the quinceanera religious celebration, the quinceanera is walked down the aisle accompanied by her parents and her godparents. The Quinceanera is presented to the center of the altar for the mass. After the quinceanera mass, the quinceanera can choose to do the crowing, changing of shoes, and the doll presentation. However, it is customary to do these quinceanera traditions at the reception.

Quinceanera Reception: After the religious ceremony, the festivities can begin with lots of food, drinks, and music. These quinceanera parties are usually arranged around a particular theme. For ideas on many great quinceanera themes, see our Quinceanera Themes idea page!

Every quinceanera reception usually includes the following:

The Introduction of the Court of Honor: To begin the festivities, the court of honor is first presented prior to the quinceanera. Each name of the court of honor is announced as they enter. This announcement is usually done with background quinceanera music. For a list of popular quinceanera music, see our quinceanera songs suggestion page.

The Presentation of the Quinceanera: After the presentation of the court of honor, the quinceanera is finally introduced. A quinceanera may choose to walk in on the arm of her escort. A special song is also played for her entrance.

Crowning of the Quinceanera: The mother of the quinceanera traditionally does the crowning of the quinceanera. The headpiece worn by the Quinceanera is to be replaced with a quinceanera tiara or crown. A scepter can also be presented to the quinceanera at the same time. For more details on the significance of this quinceanera tradition, see the Crowning of the Quinceanera information page.

Presentation of the Last Doll: For details on this quinceanera tradition, see the Presentation of the Last Doll info page.

Changing of the Shoes: For details on this quinceanera tradition, see the Changing of the Quinceanera Shoes info page.

The Quinceanera Waltz: The main highlight of the Quinceanera is the waltz or el bals. Months of practice are spent for this special dance prior to the day of the Quinceanera. In most cultures, the quinceanera first dances with her father during a special quinceanera song. The quinceanera can then dance with her honor escort and finally the quinceanera court of honor can join in.

The Toast: The father usually leads the toast for the quinceanera. The master or mistress of ceremony, bandleader, or even the honor escort can also do the toast.

The Thank You: The parents of the Quinceanera give thanks to the quinceanera for turning out so beautifully and also thank God for bringing her to them. The parents of the quinceanera also give thanks to God for seeing her through every day up to her quinceanera. The quinceanera then gives thanks to her parents for everything they do as well as giving her the party. The quinceanera also gives thanks to the sponsors for their contributions and to the guest for coming.
Quinceanera Terms

Learn commonly used Quinceanera vocabulary and definitions to important terms regarding the Quinceanera celebration.

The Honor Escort: The honor escort or chambelan de honor, is usually a brother, cousin, or even the father of the quinceanera. The honor escort accompanies the quinceanera throughout the ceremony and during the reception.

The Court of Honor: Traditionally, the court of honor or corte de honor, consists of fourteen damas and fourteen chambelanes. Today, however, it is more common for the quinceanera to consist of only seven damas and seven chambelanes. The court of honor is usually made up of the quinceanera's closest friends and family. The quinceanera court of honor may also include pajes or flower girls who sprinkle the quinceanera's path with flower petals.

Sponsors (Padrinos): This tradition is designed to spread the economic burden among the family and close family friends. Each padrino donates cash or volunteers to buy a specific item such as the cake, tiara, photo album, or flowers.

Mass: A religious church service or misa is usually done in honor of the quinceanera.

Other Important Quinceanera Terms:

Vestido de Quinceanera = Quinceanera Dress
El Ramo = Quinceanera Flower Bouquet
La Medalla = Medallion/Necklace (Gold)
Los Aretes = Earrings (Gold)
El Anillo = Ring (Gold)
La Esclava = Bracelet (Gold)
Libro de Firmas = Guestbook
El Cojin = Kneeling Pillow
Las Zapatillas = Heel Shoes
Recuerdos = Favors/Keepsakes
La Muneca = Quinceanera Doll
La Corona = Tiara/Crown
El Rosario = Rosary
La Biblia = Bible
Quinceanera Traditions

Many of the traditional gifts for the Quinceanera have a special meaning. Their honored significance relates to the Quinceanera's coming of age. These gifts are special signs of loyalty and commitment to God, family, and the community. The significance of several quinceanera accessories is listed below.

The Quinceanera Doll:

The last doll serves as a symbol that a quinceanera is no longer a child but a young woman. It serves as a symbol of maturity and it represents the last doll the young woman will receive. Traditionally, the parents or godparents are chosen to give this important gift.

The doll is typically made out of porcelain and can vary greatly in height. Many quinceaneras choose a more traditional doll that is approximately two to three feet in height. Smaller quinceanera dolls, however, are becoming increasingly popular as quinceaneras opt to go with a smaller doll that is only one to two feet in height. Regardless of the height, the doll's dress should resemble the Quinceanera's gown and share the same colors.

During the reception, a special time is set apart to present the quinceanera with her last doll. The godparents or parents are called up to the center of the dance floor to present this very special doll. Most quinceaneras conserve this doll in their room as decoration for a long time. It also serves as a reminder of the wonderful and spectacular quinceanera celebration she had.

This special tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. However, the last doll still remains a memorable gift today as it has been during previous generations. The presentation of a quinceanera's last doll is an important part of the quinceanera celebration that marks the end of childhood and the entrance to womanhood.

The Quinceanera Zapatillas:

The Quinceanera celebration is a traditional ritual that marks the transition of a child to a young woman. The tradition of changing the shoes of the Quinceanera is yet another way to symbolize this change.

Prior to the day of the quinceanera, it is expected that the quinceanera has not been able to wear heel shoes. Therefore, during the church ceremony, the quinceanera traditionally wears flat shoes without any heels symbolizing her child status.

The flat shoes are then changed for heeled shoes or zapatillas at the reception during a special presentation. The changing of shoes is usually done following the presentation of the last doll and the shoes are changed either by the father or older brother of the Quinceanera.

After the shoes are changed, the Quinceanera is now ready to take the first dance of the evening as a young lady. This special tradition of changing the Quinceanera's shoes to her zapatillas is another important part of the quinceanera celebration and other way to show that the Quinceanera is no longer a girl but a young woman.
Significance of Other Important Quinceanera Accessories:

**The Quinceanera’s Tiara** - Denotes a "princess" before God and the world. Also signifies a triumph over childhood and the ability to face the challenges ahead.

**The Quinceanera’s Scepter** - An symbol of authority and responsibility now being given to the Quinceanera.

**The Quinceanera’s Bracelet or Ring** - Represents the never-ending circle of life. It symbolizes the unending stage of womanhood and the quinceanera's abilities and future contributions.

**The Quinceanera’s Earrings** - A reminder to listen to the word of God and the world and to always hear and respond to the world around her.

**The Quinceanera’s Cross or Medal** - Signifies faith in God, in herself, and in the world.

**The Quinceanera’s Bible** - Important resources to keep the word of God in the life of the Quinceanera.
History of a Quinceanera

The transition from childhood to womanhood is an important event in almost any culture. Hispanics, however, mark this memorable occasion with the celebration of a Quinceanera or Sweet 15. The Quinceanera tradition is believed to have started many years ago when the Spanish conquerors brought the tradition to Mexico and others say the tradition originated with the Aztecs. Regardless, a Quinceanera celebration is a Hispanic tradition associated with Mexican, central and South American cultures. Through the different ceremonies that take place today, the young Quinceanera is formally introduced to society and it is a day to give thanks for having reached this age.

The coordination of the entire Quinceanera event is a teamwork effort of family, friends and relatives. Very strong family ties come into play. It is customary that all these family, friends and relatives will volunteer to be padrinos or sponsors. Each sponsor takes financial and/or moral responsibility over what they have been assigned including the cake, invitations, doll, bible, rosary, etc.

It is customary that the Quinceanera will wear a ball gown usually with a petticoat or crinolina underneath to make the dress look extra puffy, and a crown or tiara along with her gloves. In the United States the dress is most commonly of white color, while in other countries such as Mexico it is very common to see the Quinceanera wear a pastel color dress or even red, royal blue, or burgundy.

Quinceanera accessories usually include:

- A quinceanera doll (her last doll)
- A special quinceanera kneeling pillow
- Quinceanera bible and rosary
- A quinceanera tiara or crown
- A matching photo album and guest signature book
- Specially decorated quinceanera toasting glasses and matching cake knives

Traditionally, the celebration will usually consist of have fourteen young girls called damas and fourteen young men called chambelanes, in addition to the Quinceanera’s own chambelan de honor. Nowadays, Quinceaneras will sometimes choose to have only seven damas and seven chambelanes. Quinceaneras can also choose to have only all damas or all chambelanes. Typically the damas will all wear same color and style gowns to coordinate with the Quinceanera gown and the boys wear coordinating tuxedos.

The actual Quinceanera celebration consists of several parts. It is traditional to have a special thanksgiving mass or ceremony, followed by the reception and the banquet, and not to forget the famous quinceanera waltz or el bals.

After months of practice for the waltz, the moment finally comes during the reception. It is assumed that the Quinceanera prior to this date has not been able to dance with anyone before. It is at this time that the Quinceanera will dance the waltz with her chambelan and accompanied by her damas and other chambelanes. This is a major highlight of the celebration. Other important highlights will follow such as the toast and the cutting of the cake.

Without a doubt the Quinceanera celebration is a major Hispanic tradition where family, friends and relatives will go thru every effort to attend and participate in this celebration.

The entire festivity is full of spiritual and emotional moments, and composed of several events that take place, where God, thanksgiving, food, music and dance are the mix of ingredients for a joyous culmination after months of planning.
Instructions

Things You’ll Need:

- Church reservations
- Dress
- Photographer
- Music
- Chambelanes
- Candles
- Food and drinks
- Venue

Step1: A Quinceanera typically begins with a church ceremony confirming a girl's passage into womanhood. You will need to speak with your preacher or priest about reserving a date and time for this service as well as setting up rehearsals for this service.

Step2: Directly after the religious ceremony, all invitees should proceed to the reception. This means you should also reserve a reception hall or large area in which to throw your big bash for the same date as the religious ceremony.

Step3: You need to make a guest list and send out invitations at least two weeks ahead of time with RSVPs so that you will know the size of the venue you will need and how many you will need to cater for.

Step4: Reserve the catering service for the time of the reception, taking into account the number of people who have RSVPed. Make sure to include arrangements for the cake either through the caterer or by ordering a cake separately.

Step5: A Quinceanera is practically like a wedding. You will need to take your daughter to find a dress and for fittings and adjustment with plenty of time before the party. Do not try and pick a dress without her.

Step6: You will need to either book entertainment for the music or build up a list of songs you will have played. Songs should be sentimental to begin with; after all, they are about a little girl turning into a woman. They can get more fun and upbeat later.

Step7: Prepare a toast or speech about giving thanks for the years you have had your little girl and your hopes for her in the future.

Step8: You should have chosen 7 'damas' or ladies who will be the star's escorts as well as 7 'chambelanes' or young men who will act as her escorts. They should have matching appropriate attire.

Step9: The young girl should enter with a prepared waltz to be performed with one of her chambelanes. The others may join in later. Sometimes families choose to have a more modern dance performed as well.

Step10: Plan and document the order of events for the party and make sure all involved are fully aware of this order of events.

Step11: On the day of the Quinceanera, someone should be in charge of making sure all events are in order and that everything is going as planned. Do not leave things to chance.

Step12: Enjoy the one of the greatest days of yours and your daughter's life.